

The Builder.

No. CCCLXXVIII.

SATURDAY, MAY 4, 1850.



Cave have, as our readers know, a strong conviction of the advantages which have resulted from the operations of the Art-Union of London, and the good it is yet to do. On Tuesday, the 30th ult., Drury-lane Theatre was filled to receive the report of the council and witness for the fourteenth time the distribution of the amount subscribed for the purchase of works of art.

The Duke of Cambridge, President, took the chair precisely at twelve o'clock (amidst more cheering than we need talk of), and said,—Ladies and gentlemen, I have great pleasure in meeting you on the present occasion, because there is nothing which can disturb good feeling amongst you. You may recollect that, last year, some differences had arisen between the Government and the society relative to the selection of pictures by the prizeholders. That difference, I am happy to say, is now all over, the question having been satisfactorily settled. I think that that information cannot prove otherwise than highly gratifying to you; and I have the further pleasure of knowing that the prints which have been distributed among the subscribers have given general satisfaction. There is only one other point to which I will allude, but that is also of a highly gratifying nature, viz., the fact that the subscriptions for the year have considerably increased. And now, ladies and gentlemen, having called your attention to these three heads, I feel that I have nothing to do but to ask the honorary secretary to read the report.

Mr. George Godwin, F.R.S., then read the following

REPORT.

In the report which the council laid before the last general meeting, it was stated that subscribers for the ensuing year would receive an illustrated volume, and an impression of a line engraving then in progress. The council afterwards found, however, that it would be late in the present year before these works could be completed, and being fortunately enabled to obtain a pair of plates, "The Smile" and "The Frown," engraved by Mr. C. W. Sharp and Mr. W. D. Taylor, from pictures by T. Webster, R.A., and a series of designs by D. MacIver, R.A., illustrating Shakespeare's "Seven Ages," they determined to appropriate these to the subscription of 1850, and to postpone the issue of those first alluded to. "The Smile" and "The Frown" being finished, they were enabled to deliver the prints on payment of the subscription, and so to obviate an objection which had been raised on other occasions. The selling price of the pair of prints alone, it may be mentioned, would have been double the amount of the annual subscription. The illustrations of the "Seven Ages," to be received in addition to the above, have been etched on steel-plates by Mr. Edward Goodall, and are now at press.

The result of this arrangement is, that the subscriptions for the year amount to the sum of 11,180l. 6s., being an increase of 789l. on the sum subscribed in 1849.

Impressions from the engraving of "Sabrina," due to the subscribers of that year, have been distributed. Each subscriber is further entitled to an impression from a fac-simile engraving, after the premiated design in *basso-relievo*, by Mr. Hancock, "Christ Entering Jerusalem," which is at press, and will soon be ready for delivery.

Subscribers for the ensuing year will receive an edition of Goldsmith's "Traveller," con-

taining thirty illustrations on wood, and the choice from two engravings—"The Villa of Lucullus," by Mr. Willmore, after Mr. Leitch, and the "Burial of Harold," by Mr. Bacon, after F. R. Pickersgill, A.R.A.

The illustrations of "The Traveller" are by Messrs. Aysdell, Armitage, Absolon, Corbould, Dodgson, Duncan, Frost, A.R.A., Gilbert, Hulme, F. Goodall, Harding, John Martio, Huskisson, Leitch, Parrott, Stanfield, R.A., F. Taylor, Cave Thomas, Topham, Wehnert, and E. M. Ward, A.R.A.; engraved by Corbould, Cooper, Dalziel, Green, Jackson, Linton, Mason, Martin, W. Meason, Thompson, Vitzelly, Whimper, and Williams.

The whole are nearly ready for press.

"The Crucifixion," after Hilton, promises to be a fine work. The size and costliness of this engraving, and the risk which would attend electrotyping it, have led the council to decide on taking from it only a comparatively small number of impressions, and issuing them as prizes in some future year.

Engravings are in progress from "Richard Cœur de Lion pardoning Bertrand de Gournon," after Mr. Cross, and "The Piper," after Mr. F. Goodall. The porcelain statuettes, bronzes, and casts in iron, awarded in previous years, have all been produced and delivered to their respective owners. In continuation of this portion of the society's operations, the design in *basso-relievo* by Mr. Armstead, "The Death of Boadicea," has been produced in bronze by Messrs. Elkington: twenty repetitions of this design, so executed, will be distributed to-day. The council have, further, selected an antique Tazza, No. 529, in the Vase Room of the British Museum, the decoration of which is known as the "Quarrel of Agamemnon and Achilles," to be produced in cast-iron for a future year. Hereafter they contemplate producing, in bronze, reduced models of the statues of Hampden, Clarendon, and Falkland,—executed for the new Palace of Parliament at Westminster.

The medals commemorative of Wren have been distributed, and the council may point to the reverse, by Mr. B. Wyon, showing St. Paul's Cathedral, as one of the most successful medallie representations of a building ever executed. An accident to the dies in hardening made new ones necessary, as was the case some time since with another of the society's medals, and the council are led again to direct attention to the importance of discovering some means of lessening the chance of failure to which dies are now unavoidably subject. The Inigo Jones medal, by Mr. Carter, is making satisfactory progress. The reverse will show the Banqueting-House, Whitehall. The society's medallie series, the object of which is "at once to give some scope to the genius of our countrymen in this important branch, render a just tribute to departed artists, and illustrate the history of British art," now comprises Reynolds, Chantrey, Wren, Hugarth, Flaxman, and Inigo Jones.

In continuation of the series, a medal of Bacon, the sculptor, has been commissioned for an ensuing distribution. Hereafter series of these medals will form valuable and interesting prizes.

The council would always keep in view the disinterested and high-minded purpose for which this association was formed: namely, to diffuse far and wide throughout the empire a love of art; to raise as much as possible the standard of perfection for the productions of our native artists; and to excite in the public mind a proper idea of the utility of the artist's functions. With this last point in view the council are considering the advisability of enlarging the scope of the medallie series, so as to include distinguished living artists, and thus form a new incentive to exertion, by affording the prospect of a widely-spread public acknowledgment of eminence; an incentive to struggles which not only give glory to the artist, but add to the glory of his country. The number of those who know how to estimate art is much greater than it formerly was. The gentleman, who, when recently told that the price of a picture he admired was fifty guineas, asked seriously if "that sort of colour was particularly dear?" as he had "painted all his front parlours for fifty shillings," does not represent a very large

class. But there is still a want of proper appreciation of art on the part of many.

At the last distribution of the society's funds, the sum of 3,205l. was allotted for the purchase of works of art by the prizeholders themselves. With this, 91 paintings and drawings were purchased, ranging in value from 300l. to 10l.

By the permission of the Society of British Artists, their works were exhibited in the Suffolk-street Galleries for four weeks gratuitously, and were visited by an immense number of persons.

Sculpture was not purchased by any of the prizeholders, and the council feel it to be their duty again to direct attention to this great art, by reminding prizeholders that they will be at liberty to commission the execution in marble of any model exhibited in the public galleries, the price of which, if so executed, was left with the keeper at the opening of the gallery.

The prizes after exhibition were sent to various parts of the United Kingdom, to America, and the Colonies. Some that went to the north-west of England led to the formation of a local exhibition, aided by the neighbouring proprietors, which produced a considerable sum for the charities of the town, and was afterwards opened at a reduced charge to the labouring classes, who visited it in large numbers.

The painter of one of the pictures sent to New York, in the United States, received a letter shortly after its arrival there, requesting him to accept a commission for another picture. The writer said, and it is this more essentially which leads to noting the fact,— "There is an awakened feeling in this country (America) for all that relates to art, but it is, of necessity, still in its infancy, and the best efforts of the older artists among us, appear to great disadvantage by the side of those of the English school. Your painting is considered quite a gem, and has attracted no little attention among the lovers of high art hereabout."

Of this awakened feeling in America, the council have received with gratification other proofs. There are now four Art-Unions there. One, "The American Art-Union," established in New York in 1835, has this year 16,000 subscribers, contributing 50,000 dollars; and writers are beginning to ask there, whether the millions of dollars spent on the military establishment of the country might not have been more profitably used for the promotion of the fine arts,—the arts which humanize and elevate, and induce a sympathy with what is great and good. Well has the poet said—

"That beauty, good, and knowledge are three sisters
That doat upon each other, friends to man."

The council have to regret the loss, by death, of an early and esteemed member of their body, John Noble, Esq., F.S.A. Other vacancies have been caused by the retirement of Edward Wynham, Esq.; T. P. Mathew, Esq.; and Henry Thomas Hope, Esq., M.P.—S. M. Peto, Esq., M.P.; and the Rev. Dr. Mortimer, head master of the City of London School, have been elected to fill two of the vacancies thus created.

The reserve fund now amounts to the sum of 3,757l. 13s. 10d. It has been aided by the earlier payment of subscriptions, on the amount of which interest has been obtained.

The following is a general statement of the receipts and disbursement: a more detailed account will be published hereafter.

Amount of subscriptions	211,180	8	0
Alotted for purchase of pictures, statuettes, medals, &c.	3,073	0	0
Cost of engravings and etchings of the year	3,253	4	3
Cost of report, printing, advertising, rent, &c., and reserve of 2½ per cent.	2,854	3	9
	211,180	8	0

The accounts have been audited by three members of the finance committee, and by two gentlemen from the body of subscribers, Mr. St. Barbe and Mr. Dover, to whom the thanks of the council are offered.

The sum of 4,260l. appropriated to the pur-